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LOS BANOS TRUCKING COMPANY OWNERS FACE EXPANDED TAX AND BRIBERY CHARGES

FRESNO, Calif.—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that a federal grand jury returned a superseding indictment charging KULWANT LASHER, 51, TARLOCHAN LASHER, 53, and JASWINDER LASHER, 48, brothers and owners of Lasher Brothers Trucking Company Inc., based in Los Banos, Calif., with 19 tax violations in addition to the bribery charges already filed against them.

The case is the product of an extensive investigation by the Internal Revenue Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Treasury Inspector General of Tax Administration (TIGTA).

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Karen A. Escobar and Sheila K. Oberto, who are prosecuting the case, the LASHER brothers were charged in October 2007 with a scheme to bribe an IRS Revenue Officer to abate a tax liability of approximately \$2.5 million. According to TIGTA, the case is the largest in the United States involving the bribery of a revenue officer. The new tax charges relate to the Lasher Brothers Trucking Company's failure to account for and pay employee withholding and F.I.C.A., or Social Security and Medicare taxes for tax years 2003 through 2007 totaling nearly \$2 million.

The LASHER brothers allegedly offered to pay an undercover Revenue Officer of the IRS \$600,000 in cash to eliminate approximately \$2.5 million in delinquent employee withholding and F.I.C.A. taxes and penalties. As part of the alleged bribery scheme to eliminate their trucking company's tax debt, the LASHER brothers, during meetings with the Revenue Officer at a restaurant and gas station, paid to the Revenue Officer for his personal use \$56,500 in cash and handed over a quitclaim deed for KULWANT LASHER's residence in Los Banos, along with a 2003 BMW 745L.

A conviction for bribery of a public official carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison and a fine of up to \$1.8 million. A conviction for each of the 19 tax charges carries a maximum penalty of five years and a fine of up to \$250,000, together with the costs of prosecution. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

The LASHER brothers are scheduled to appear for a status conference before United States District Judge Anthony W. Ishii on Tuesday, October 27, 2008, at 11:00 a.m. The charges are only allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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